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Federal Communications Commission
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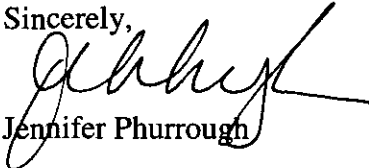
Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Submission to Official Record of:
MB Docket No. 02-277; MM Docket Nos. 01-235, 01-317, 00-244

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Please submit the attached document, entitled "Public Opinion Opposes the FCC's March toward Concentrated Media Markets" to the official record for dockets MB 02-277, MM 01-235, 01-317, 00-244.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Phurrough

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Consumer Federation of America

PUBLIC OPINION OPPOSES THE FCC'S MARCH TOWARD CONCENTRATED MEDIA MARKETS

**Dr. Mark Cooper
Media Ownership Roundtable,
Federal Communications Commission
May 27, 2003**

Opposition to Mergers and Relaxation of Ownership Limits

After two years of debate about media ownership policy the public has come to understand just how dangerous increasing concentration of the media is. Two recent polls, conducted by companies who have been pushing for relaxation of limits on ownership make the point.

Lou Dobbs *Moneyline* show on CNN ran an online poll asking whether "too few corporations own too many media outlets." Ninety-eight percent said yes.¹ Hearst, one of the newspaper publishers seeking relaxation of the rules, conducted a similar poll that asked whether the current rules should be modified.² The respondents voted almost seven to one in favor of keeping the rules (62% keep status quo, 9% change, 29% don't now/no opinion). The paper cautioned that the sample might not be representative, which is true of the Lou Dobbs poll as well.

However, these results are no fluke. Polls based on scientific national random samples yield similar results.

In September 2002, Opinion Research Corp. conducted a poll for the Consumer Federation of America in which respondents overwhelming said that media companies are getting too large, the margin was 70% to 12% (with 18% undecided or no answer).³

The public also opposes mergers across media types, such as between broadcast stations and newspapers in the same city, which is a central issue in the current rulemaking. A poll conducted by Laurer Research in March of 2002 asked whether such mergers would be good or bad for the country,⁴ their negative reaction was even stronger – 75% percent of

¹ Referred to by Senator Olympia Snowe, Senate Commerce Committee, May 13, 2003, and Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein, "Big Macs and Big Media: The Decision to Supersize," *Media Institute*, May 20, 2003

² *Seattle Post Intelligenser, PI-Daily Poll*, May 19, 2003.

³ Consumer Federation of America, *Media Policy Goals Survey*, September 2002.

⁴ Laurer Research, *Cable/Satellite Television Survey*, March 2002.

respondents said mergers would be bad, compared to 12% who said it would be good (10% undecided or don't know).

The CFA September 2002 poll used the following wording which combined the cross ownership and duopoly issues as follows: "For you and your community, how would it be to allow TV companies to own more than one station and to own newspapers in one market." Respondents felt it would be bad by a three to one margin (49% to 17%, with 30% saying it would make no difference/don't know).

Support for Local Content

Concern about the impact of mergers on the quality and content of programming reflects a deep seated concern among consumers about the media. They do not feel that television accurately represents the average consumer (60% vs. 28%). Almost one half (47%) does not trust the information they find in the news.

Respondents deem it important that shows reflect the cultural and ethnic make-up of the community (very important = 35%, somewhat important = 42%, not important at all 23%). Similarly, they deem it important to have public affairs programs that discuss local issues (very important = 43%, somewhat important = 43%, not important at all 13%). They find it very important (68% = very, 25% = somewhat) that local news and events are reported.

Support for Public Interest Obligations

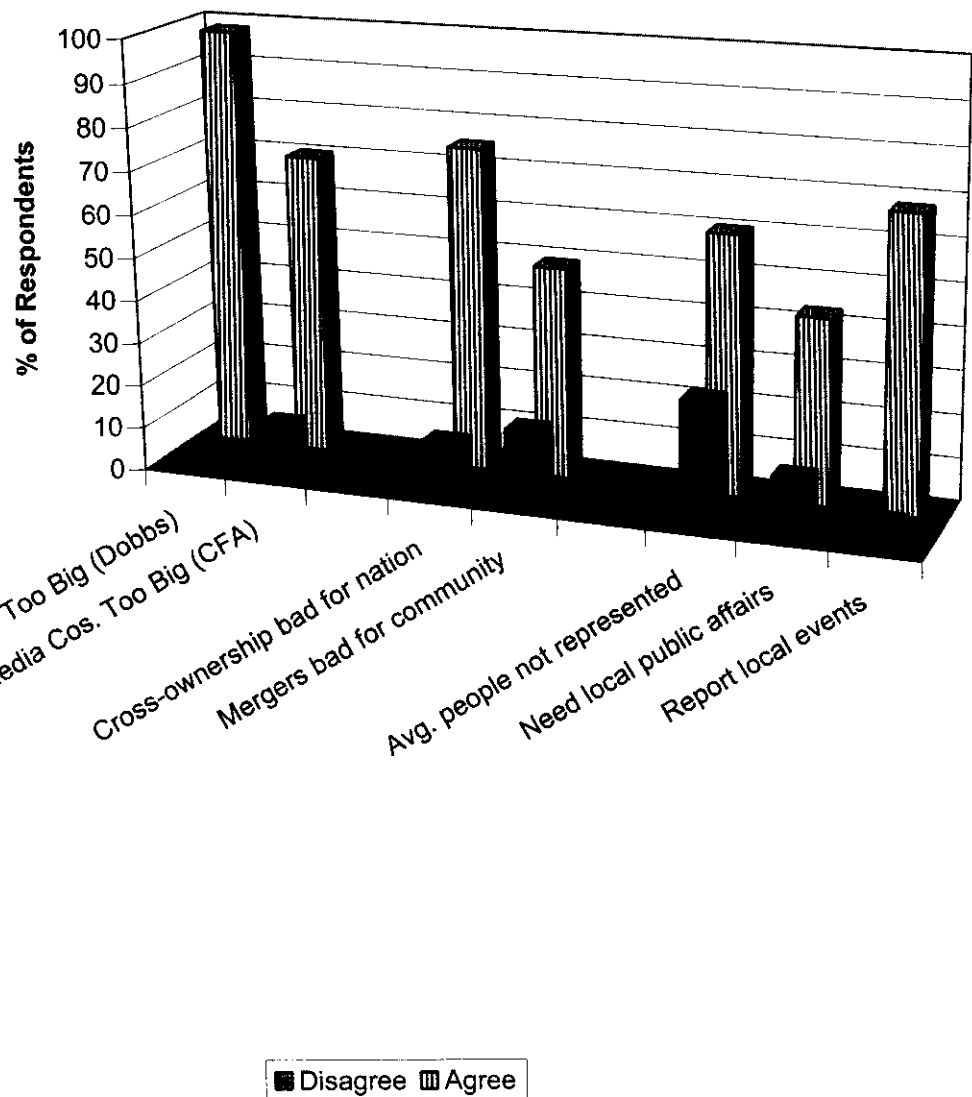
The public supports a range of public interest obligations. Almost two-thirds of respondents believe that broadcasters will just maximize profits if not directed to air public interest programming (63%).⁵ Substantial majorities of respondents believe broadcasters should provide public service programming and services. For example, approximately 70 percent of respondents say broadcasters should be required to provide more educational programming, and that figure rises to 85 percent when the new digital spectrum can be used for this purpose.⁶ The public supports a community trust fund to support public programs (very important = 36%, somewhat important = 43%; not important at all 17%).

The support for community-oriented activities with respect to television has transferred to the new communications media – the Internet. Respondents express support for public interest obligations extending to the Internet. They would like some sections of the Internet to be commercial free (82%) and protected from commercial development (77%). They believe some of the space on the Internet should be devoted to public forums (72%) and non-profit groups (68%). They believe Internet service providers should give free advertising to charities (65%) and regularly post public service announcements (59%).

⁵ *Project on Media Ownership, People for Better TV, Findings of a National Survey*, Lake Snell Perry & Associates, May 1999

⁶ *Project on Media Ownership, People for Better TV, Findings of a National Survey*, Lake Snell Perry & Associates, May 1999; *Digital Media Forum Survey Findings on Media Mergers and Internet Open Access*, September 13, 2000.

PUBLIC OPINION OPPOSES MEDIA CONCENTRATION, SUPPORTS LOCALISM AND PUBLIC INTEREST OBLIGATIONS



Sources and Notes: See text notes for sources and wording. Don't know, no difference responses not shown.